

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BOGOTA 3624

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TAGS: PEPR, PN, CO, US, XM
SUBJ: MULTILATERAL RELATIONS: REACTION TO SENATE DEBATE ON
CANAL TREATIES: PRESIDENT CONDEMNS US INTERVENTION

REF: (A) BOGOTA MEDIA REACTION FOR APRIL 15-17, 1978;
(B) STATE 95209

1. PRESIDENT LOPEZ, IN AN ENERGETIC SPEECH APRIL 16 INAUGURATING A MUSEUM IN COMMEMORATION OF THE 30TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ASSASSINATION OF POPULIST LIBERAL LEADER JORGE ELIECER GAITAN, CRITICIZED THE US SENATE'S ACCEPTANCE OF THE DECONCINI RESERVATION AND CONDEMNED WHAT HE TERMED US INTERVENTION IN LATIN AMERICA. LOPEZ, IN RECALLING THE 1948 PAN AMERICAN CONFERENCE AND ITS BOGOTA DECLARATION AGAINST FOREIGN INTERVENTION IN LATIN AMERICA, ASSERTED THAT NO NATION HAD THE UNILATERAL RIGHT OF INTERVENTION, EVEN UNDER THE PRETEXT OF ASSURING TRANSIT THROUGH THE PANAMA CANAL, COMBATTING DRUG TRAFFICKING, OR DEFENDING HUMAN RIGHTS. THE PRESIDENT ASKED THE US TO REMEMBER THE DIFFICULT PERIOD IN COLOMBIA IN 1948 WHEN THE PAN AMERICAN CONFERENCE SIGNED THE DECLARATION WHICH "GUARANTEES OUR RIGHT NEVER TO BE SUBJECTED TO INTERVENTION BY ANY FOREIGN POWERS."

2. COVERAGE OF THE SENATE DEBATE ON THE SECOND CANAL TREATY
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HAS CONSISTED LARGELY OF WIRE SERVICE REPORTS. CONSIDERABLE NEGATIVE PRESS REACTION, ESPECIALLY REGARDING THE DECONCINI RESERVATION, HAS SURFACED RECENTLY (REF A).

3. BELOW IS AN INFORMAL TRANSLATION OF THE SIGNIFICANT PORTIONS OF LOPEZ' SPEECH:

(SPEAKING OF THE NEED TO STRUGGLE AGAINST IMPERIALISM).. "NOT AGAINST THE UNITED STATES AS A NATION, BUT AGAINST THE IMPERIALISM WHICH ALL OF THE LATIN AMERICAN NATIONS MUST FACE TOGETHER."

(RECALLING THE 1948 PAN AMERICAN CONFERENCE) "THE BOGOTA DECLARATION WAS ONE OF THE MILESTONES IN THE ROAD TO CONDEMNING NORTH AMERICAN INTERVENTION IN OUR NATIONS. WHAT A RARE COINCIDENCE* HOW CAN IT BE THAT WHEN WE COMMEMORATE THE END OF THE UNITED STATES' UNILATERAL INTERVENTION IN OUR COUNTRIES, A NORTH AMERICAN SENATE AMENDMENT TO THE TREATIES, WHICH CONFIRM THE AUTONOMY AND SOVEREIGNTY OF PANAMA, SEEKS TO PROTOCOLIZE AGAIN, AFTER 30 YEARS, THE NORTH AMERICAN RIGHT TO INTERVENE IN OUR TERRITORIES? NO, COLOMBIANS, MAY A FOREIGN NATION NEVER AGAIN SET FOOT ON THE SACRED SOIL OF LATIN AMERICA* IT CANNOT BE JUSTIFIED THAT TODAY, UNDER THE PRETEXT OF ASSURING TRANSIT THROUGH THE CANAL, OR TOMORROW, UNDER THE PRETEXT OF COMBATTING THE DRUG TRAFFIC, OR AFTER TOMORROW, IN THE NAME OF HUMAN RIGHTS, AGAINST ONE IDEOLOGY OR ANOTHER, ONE NATION UNILATERALLY ACQUIRE THE RIGHT OF INTERVENTION. ANOTHER THING, VERY DISTINCT, FOR WHICH GAITAN STRUGGLED: THAT IF HEMISPHERIC INTERVENTION IN A NATION IS NECESSARY, AS IT COULD BE IN MANY CIRCUMSTANCES, IT SHOULD BE DONE WITH THE CONSENT OF ALL, THROUGH THE PERTINENT ORGAN OF THE ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES. HOW CAN IT BE THAT WITHOUT CONSULTATION, BY A TREATY, BY AN AMENDMENT BY ONE AMERICAN SENATOR, WHAT GOES FROM THE HAVANA CONFERENCE UNTIL

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THE LAST PAN AMERICAN CONFERENCE, THAT WE ARE ALL EQUAL AND NO ONE HAS MORE RIGHTS THAN THE OTHERS, AND ALL JOIN FORCES IN DEFENSE OF THE HEMISPHERE, OR HUMAN RIGHTS, OR TO COMBAT VICES, SUDDENLY A LOOPHOLE IS OPENED THROUGH WHICH ONE NATION, BECAUSE IT IS POWERFUL, SEEKS TO ACQUIRE RIGHTS WITHOUT CONSULTING ITS PARTNERS?...AT THIS TIME, WHICH I DARE TO DESCRIBE AS TRAGIC FOR THE DESTINY OF AMERICA, I ASK THAT THE UNITED STATES REMEMBER HOW A SMALL NATION...AMIDST GREAT DIFFICULTIES...LEFT THE NAME OF BOGOTA STAMPED ON A DECLARATION WHICH GUARANTEES OUR RIGHT NEVER TO BE SUBJECTED TO INTERVENTION BY ANY FOREIGN POWER."

4. COMMENT: THE STAGE HAD BEEN SET FOR LOPEZ, WHO WAS UNUSUALLY STRIDENT, BY THE RECENT LOCAL REACTIONS TO A CBS TELEVISION PROGRAM'S ALLEGATIONS OF HIGH, OFFICIAL COLOMBIAN INVOLVEMENT IN DRUG TRAFFICKING. ALSO, LOPEZ WAS SPEAKING IN A CHARGED ATMOSPHERE (GAITAN WAS A NATIONALIST AND POPULIST, REKNOWNED FOR HIS DEMAGOGUERY) AND HAD BEEN PRECEDED BY GAITAN'S DAUGHTER, A LEFTIST LIBERAL WHO ALSO CRITICIZED "NORTH AMERICAN IMPERIALISM". SPEAKING WITH THE AMBASSADOR LATER, LOPEZ SOUGHT TO SOFTEN AND MINIMIZE THE SIGNIFICANCE OF HIS REMARKS ON THE TREATY DEBATE, EXPLAINING THAT HIS POSTURE HAD BEEN INFLUENCED BY THE NATURE OF THE OCCASION.

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